A HEIFER OF THE DAWN

By
F. W. BAIN

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अप स्वसुरुषसो नग्जिहीते रिणक्ति कृष्णीरुषाय पंथां

'*Lo! how Dark Night shrinks from her sister Dawn, and gloomy Black gives way to Rosy Red.*'—Rig Weda, vii. 71

A

HEIFER OF THE DAWN

(उस्रियासंभृतामृता)

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

BY

F. W. BAIN

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ANIMULA · VAGULA · BLANDULA
HOSPES · COMESQUE · CORPORIS
FLAMMÂ · PROCUL · SCINTILLULA
ORCI · TENEBRIS · OBRUTA
CALIGINOSIS · HEU ! VEHOR
εἴδωλον · UMBRAE · FABULA
CEU · NIGRA · CONJUX · INDICA
FUNCTO · MARITI · CORPORE
POENAMQUE · NASCI · JUDICO
NEC · VIVA · JAM · NEC · MORTUA
QUALISQUE · VESPERTILIO
DIO · RELAPSO · LUMINE
NOCTURNA · DEGO · TAEDIA
DONEC · RESURGET · LUCIFER

PREFACE.

ALL SWEETNESS, says the Rig Weda, IS COLLECTED IN THE HEIFER[a]: the Red One of the Dawn. And the Oriental use of the word, *heifer*, to signify a wife or queen, is familiar to every reader of the Hebrew Bible. If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, said Samson, ye had not found out my riddle. Thus the meaning of the title of this little story is at once clear: *the collected sweetness of the heifer:* i.e., the ambrosia[b] of the early morning, in a feminine form.

All know it, the nectar of dawn, who are wise enough to rise, like the hero of this story, before the sun. And yet, perhaps it is necessary to live in the East, properly to appreciate the meaning of morning. Love, for example, is a very old God: as some of the ancient Greeks

[a] iii. 30, 14. (The translation is literally exact: *wishwam swádma sambhritam usriyáyam*.)

[b] The feminine form, *amritá*, is the name of one of the digits of the moon. And *apropos:* could we penetrate into the darkness of mythological origins, we might perhaps discover, that the *half-moon* on the forehead of Maheshwara is related to the *horns* of his bull. And similarly, Isis, the *horned moon* = Io, the *heifer*.

told us, even the very oldest of all[c]. Why is that? Because he comes out of the East: he belongs to the Dawn. EROS, EOS, AURORA, USHAS, ARUSHA. First comes Night, and Chaos: and then, out of the black there arises, silently, imperceptibly, irresistibly, the glorious, the blushing, the beautiful, amber-clouded, opal-shredded, amethyst-bedappled Dawn. O Dawn, how I do love thee! how, after a night of blackness and distress, has thy delicious fragrance raised me from the dead, with its colour and its camphor and the nectar touch of its rosy finger, softer than flowers, cooler than sandal-wood. Yes, it is necessary to be a dweller in the East, to taste and understand the religion of the Dawn.

And the heifer? What is the secret of the rooted affection of the Aryan and Iranian, the Weda and Awesta, for the Cow?

Partly, no doubt, its utilitarian value. But they are deceived, who think that this is all. There is religion[d] in it, mysticism, æsthetic affection. The Cow is an Idea. This was first brought home to the translator in the following way.

Passing through Rajputána, he came to Jeypore. And it happened, on a hot afternoon, that he was rambling

[c] As also in Rig Weda, 10. 129. 4.

[d] If you like, superstition. But it is not growing weaker. I have repeatedly suggested, to comparatively emancipated Hindoos, that cows might be killed. The very possibility was always repudiated with horror and disgust.

in its outskirts, ankle-deep in white dust,—for Jeypore stands on the edge of Marústhalí, 'the region of death,'—and suddenly he came upon a cluster of *chattris*, yellow marble memorial tombs of old Kings, and he lay down to rest in their shade. And there as he lay, blessing the old rájá whose *umbrella* afforded a refuge for the suppliant even after his death—there came along the blinding, glaring white way, with noiseless footfall, a little mouse-coloured heifer, bowing its head from side to side, as it stepped on daintily in the dust, with great, wise, black, lustrous, beautiful eyes. On its back was a pile of red clothing: on that again, a great bowl or basin of brass: and in the bowl sat, like a little deity, sucking its thumb, and crooning to itself some monotonous ditty, a tiny Hindoo child. The fierce furious glare of the sun was collected as it were into a focus of white light on its bare head, and glinted from its glossy, jet-black hair. Moved to adoration, the spectator seized his opportunity as they wandered by, and offered tribute and homage to the Mother and the Child. A pair of great eyes stared at him with alarm, but the slender little brown fingers shut down instinctively over the silver rupee. Then they passed on, the little deity and its tutelary 'vehicle'*, moving delicately with that undulating hesitation which the Creator has bestowed only upon women and cows, reached the black jaws

* Every Hindoo deity has his (or her) 'vehicle,' or *wáhana*.

of a street narrow as a door, rounded the corner, and disappeared.

Since then, every heifer, and for the sake of the heifer, also even every ox, has possessed for the writer a touch of divinity. The roast beef of old England savours of cannibalism as often as he looks into their great reproachful eyes: eyes, out of which look back at you the infinite patience, the imperturbable repose, and the stubborn intractability of the inscrutable East.

POONA, *Dec.* 17, 1903.

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[To appreciate this *anthology*, the English reader should remember, that according to the Hindoos, flowers are not only the arrows of the God of Love, but the very stuff of which his bow is made: bees are his bowstring, and MADHU, or Spring, is his *âme damnée* and sworn ally.]

A Heifer of the Dawn.

Invocation.

Salutation to the great Third eye of the Master of all Emotion: that eye, which could wither the God of Love with shooting flames, and yet open, to her confusion, with the tenderness of a flower on the bashful Párwatí, as she was endeavouring to rob him of the sight of her own beauty by placing her hands over the other two [a] *!*

There lived formerly, in another *kalpa*, a stupid king, who possessed two things, that like the edge of a sword kept him from sleeping: a brave enemy and a beautiful daughter: for his enemy was too strong, and his daughter too clever for him: moreover, his enemy was young, and his daughter unmarried. And after racking his brains to no purpose for a long time, there came to him at last,

[a] The details of this conjugal episode between Shíwa and his wife may be found in the *Kumára Sambhawa*, the *chef d'œuvre* of Kálidás.

as he lay awake one night, a thought. And he exclaimed: Ha! I will mix this poison and this nectar, and pour the sea of my daughter's beauty over the fire of my enemy's hostility, and so extinguish it altogether: and gain for my kingdom, security, and for my daughter, a husband, and for myself, rest, and a release from anxiety. And this idea pleased him so much that he shouted aloud. Then all the guards, thinking that he was in danger, ran in with lights. And they saw the King stark naked, skipping about the room like a calf, waving his hands, and exclaiming: Ha! my enemy: ha! my daughter. So they said: Surely his short wits have come to an end, and now he is mad. But the King sent for musicians, and rose up then and there, and made merry all night, waiting with impatience for the day.

Then in the morning he chose a messenger, and sent him away to his enemy, and said to him, by the mouth of his envoy: Let us be friends and rule the earth together in peace: and I will bestow on thee my daughter in marriage, asking from thee nothing in return. And what a gift mine is, thou shalt discover when it comes to thee. For should I describe its value and its qualities in words beforehand, I should seem but a liar in thine eyes.

So the envoy went with his message. But the King's daughter, hearing of the matter, privately sent agents of her own, saying nothing to her father, to find out all they could about her bridegroom, and his affairs.

Then time went by, and the King's envoy was absent so long, that the King could hardly keep himself alive for vexation and impatience. But at last, as he sat one day with his daughter beside him, there came in a doorkeeper who fell at his feet, and said: Thy envoy has returned, and now, what are the King's commands? And the King bade her[b] bring him in, without losing a moment. So the envoy came in, just as he was, dusty and travel-stained, and stood before him. And the King looked at him with red eyes, and said: What shall be done to the envoy who lingers on the King's errand, till his black hairs turn to grey, and the grey to white?

Then the envoy joined his hands, and said: O King, let thy anger fall, but not on the innocent. For as for me, I went and came, swifter than a traveller in the rainy season returning to the caresses of

[b] The doorkeeper (*pratihárí*) seems to have been, in old Hindoo courts, a woman; as were sometimes even the guards.

his bride. All the delay was caused by the madness of this son-in-law of thine that is to be, or not, according to thy pleasure. For some time ago, it happened, that returning from his army, which he had led away in person to subdue a vassal that had revolted, he entered his apartments, when nobody expected him, and saw his queen, for he had only one [e], conversing with a man, whom she had conveyed into the palace in the clothes of a woman. And instantly there came over him a horror of the world and its delusions, but above all of women, so great, that, after banishing his queen, for he would not put her to death, he turned his back upon his royal estate, and cast off his kingly pleasures, as a snake discards its old skin. And he went and shut himself up in a deserted temple of Maheshwara, that stands in a wood, outside his capital, on the edge of a sacred lotus pool. And there he lives like an ascetic, cutting himself off from the conversation of men, so that even his ministers can scarcely see him on important business of state. And it was long before I could even manage to advise him of my coming, and your pro-

[e] A proof of great and unusual delicacy or self-control in an eastern potentate.

posal. But at last, he sent for me, having learned of my presence through his prime minister. So they led me to the temple in the early morning. And as I stood waiting before it, suddenly I saw the lotuses of the pool opening, one after another, at the touch of the early sun; and at the same instant, the young King came out before the temple, and stood on the steps leading down into the pool. And he looked like a great ruby, for the sun's rays lit up the red bark garments in which he was dressed and edged them with a fringe of flame: and I was amazed at the sight of him, for he seemed like a King even among Kings. And he said to me, in deep tones[d]: Go back to thy master, and tell him, that for the good of my kingdom and his own, I will accept his offer: and there shall be peace and friendship between us, and union cemented by the gift of his daughter: whom I will treat royally, and as becomes a queen. But not as a wife: for after we have perambulated the fire together, let her live in her own palace, and forget that I am alive.

But when the envoy had got so far in his tale,

[d] According to the Hindoos, a deep-toned (*gambhira*) voice is a special note of manliness and wisdom.

the King exclaimed in anger: What! does he dare to make such terms, and send such an answer, and dishonour me and my daughter by such a proposal? Then hearing him speak, his daughter, sitting beside him, began to laugh. And she said: O my father, how is it, that with such grey hairs, thou understandest nothing, neither of men, nor of women, nor of policy, nor of me? Then the King said: My daughter, what are these words? And what dost *thou* understand, of men or of policy, or even of women and thyself, who art but fifteen * years old? Then his daughter said: Here, in this matter, all has gone well, and turned out according to thy wish; and yet thou art ready to throw away all the advantages to thy realm, by rejecting the proposal of my husband, which is as it should be. Then the King said: How is it well, and not rather very ill? and how shall such a husband obtain thee, who proposes not to treat thee as his wife? and what is this absurdity that thou speakest?

Then his daughter got up and stood before him. And she clapped her hands together, till her bangles

* Women are women very early in the East. But the number fifteen had formerly a significance analogous to that of our own 'sweet seventeen,' as is well observed by A. V. W. Jackson of the old Iranians. (*Avesta Reader*, p. 44.)

rang, and stamped her little foot on the ground, till it left a red print upon the inlaid floor[f], and her anklets clashed; and her mouth curled like Kama's bow, as if to discharge the scornful arrows of her words. And she exclaimed: Didst thou understand policy, thou wouldst not abandon an advantageous alliance from anger springing out of personal considerations: didst thou understand men, thou wouldst have perceived, from the answer of my husband, that he is, as the envoy has said, an elephant among men, and worthy of thee and me: didst thou understand women, thou wouldst know, that he who has never tasted their nectar, may pass even his whole life without ever knowing its sweetness, but that he who has tasted it once, will taste it again, though gods and demons should stand in his way to prevent him: and didst thou understand me, thou wouldst know that I will have this husband, and he shall have me, on any conditions whatever: and like a snake-charmer, I will soothe him and wile him by my jugglery and the cunning of my voice till he will dance[g] as I please. Out on her who cannot

[f] Because her feet were reddened with lac.

[g] The cobra sits up, dances and bows its head, when the juggler plays to it.

cajole her own husband! Then said the King: Daughter, doubtless thou art a very pundit, and thy pretty head is full of the sciences, though how they got there at thy age, only the Creator can tell: none the less thou art still very young: and in this matter of husbands, and their management and cajolery, thou hast still to learn grammar[h]. Then his daughter laughed. And she exclaimed: O my father, art thou really my father? Dost thou think that the craft of a woman in the art which is her own comes to her by age and experience, which on the contrary rather take it away? Did the Creator teach the spider to make webs, and the bee to make honey, and the lotus to bloom? and did he give its wisdom to the elephant, and yet leave woman devoid of the skill proper to her nature? Know, that I will take this burden off thy shoulders and lay it on my own, and bring the matter to a successful issue, for thee, and also for my husband, and for myself. Send thy envoy, and accept his proposal. And send me also to him, as quickly as possible: and in the meanwhile, I will send him,

[h] Grammar was called, by the old Hindoos, the *door* of all the sciences: and they studied it sometimes for years and often all their life long.

by the mouth of thy envoy, a message on my own account.

So the King yielded to her, for by reason of his own stupidity and his affection for her, he could not oppose her. And he sent accordingly a message to his son-in-law, saying: I have accepted thy terms and am sending thee my daughter with her retinue together with the new moon. And I wish thee good fortune, and a change of disposition. And when the envoy was about to depart, the King's daughter said to him: Say to my husband these words, and beware lest thou add to them or take away one: *Thy female slave is coming to thee with the new moon, and has noted all her lord's commands. And the time of her arrival he shall learn by the mouth of a mediator: but his eye shall not be offended by her presence, nor his ear by her conversation, till he shall ask for it of his own accord.*

So the envoy went, and carried to the young King the message of his father-in-law, and of his future queen. But when the young King heard her message, he said to himself: Her words are soft, and cunning, and like butter to the ear: but she is a woman: let not even her shadow come near me. And he remained in the deserted temple, which

resembled the ruin of his own life, expecting and yet shunning the arrival of his queen.

Then after a while came the last day of the dark fortnight, and the eve of the new moon[1]; and with it came the King's daughter, with her retinue. And she pitched her camp outside the city, close to the wood in which stood the deserted temple, where the King her husband had fixed his abode.

[1] An important day among the Hindoos, with a name of its own (*amáwasí*).

The War of a New Moon.

The War of a New Moon.

MANGO.

THEN in the early morning, on the first day of the light fortnight, the young King arose before the sun, and went out of the temple, and wandered on the steps that went down into the pool, in which all the lotuses were preparing to welcome their lover, as he rose from behind the eastern mountain. And as he looked through the trees, suddenly he saw coming towards him with twinkling feet along the edge of the pool, a *chéti*[a], resembling an incarnation of the night of new moon, for like it, she was clothed in dark blue, and she carried in her hand a mango blossom, as it carries the digit

[a] In all Hindoo love stories, the *chéti* or *sakhi*, a hand-maiden, or female confidante, is a *sine quâ non*. All messages, all business, and even all conversation, is transacted through her, for the heroine never even speaks for herself, but requires a mouthpiece: being prevented from speaking by bashfulness, timidity, custom, and her own agitation.

of the moon. And while the King turned from her, with aversion and surprise, she came up, and stood a little way off, and said: O King, my mistress has arrived, and sends me to advise you, according to her promise; craving forgiveness for that her messenger is perforce a woman, since her confidante cannot be a man. And she sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, this flower, and if his slumbers have been sweet, it is well with her.

Then the King said: *Chéti*, take my acknowledgment to thy mistress, for her message and her flower: and tell her, that sleep is for those only, who like herself have had no dealings with the world; but for a sick man, the only remedy for a night without slumber is dawn. Then the *chéti* said: Thou art deceived: there are other and better remedies. I know both thy disease and its cure. And the King looked at her in surprise, and said: Damsel, thou art too forward, after the manner of thy kind, and thy sex. Then said the *chéti:* Ha! King: dost thou really know anything of my sex, and yet hast thou made a prisoner of thyself in this lonely old temple, grieving over so insignificant and inevitable a thing as the fickleness of a woman? Know, that once there was a King, like thyself, young and inexperienced in

the ways of the world, who, like thee, had a wife that he loved: but she died. And like thee, he abandoned the world, with its business and its pleasures, and went and lived by himself, as thou dost, in just such another old temple in a wood as this, devouring his own heart in despair. And when no one could persuade him to return to life and his kingly duties, at last there came to see him, not a young and frivolous maid like myself, but a wrinkled old *rishi*, the spiritual preceptor of his family. And he came to the King, who was clothed as thou art in garments of bark, and stood beside him, without uttering a word. So as they stood silently together, suddenly there fell to the ground the withered leaf of a bamboo tree, just as yonder yellow leaf is now fluttering down into the still water of the pool. And instantly, seeing the leaf fall, that old preceptor raised a howl of sorrow. And throwing himself upon the ground, he tore his clothes and his hair, and poured dust over his head with both hands. Then the King said: Father, what is this sudden access of sorrow? The preceptor said: Woe! woe! didst thou not mark the leaf fall from the tree? And the King wondered, and said: Holy man, surely thou art overtaken by folly. Is thy extraordinary grief suited

to the fall of a leaf from a tree? Then said the old *rishi:* O King, thine is the folly. Dost thou accuse me of folly, in bewailing the fall of a leaf, who forsakest life for the death of a woman, a thing in all respects exactly the same? For what is the death of a mortal woman, but the fall of a leaf from the tree of humanity[b]? And what, O King, is thy folly, in forsaking all, for the sake of the fickleness of a woman? Are not women by nature more fickle than the very leaves of the bamboo? And wilt thou plunge into the sea of infinite sorrow, because, after its kind, the bamboo leaf has fluttered into the pool?

Then she laid at his feet the mango flower, and turned, and went away quickly through the wood, and vanished among its trees. But the King stood in astonishment, looking after her as she went. And his eyes, as if rebels to his will, reflected in spite of him the grace of her figure, bending and swaying like a swan gliding over a pool. Then he stooped down, and picked up the flower, and smelled it. And he said: Mango, very sweet is thy smell, and musical was the voice of this audacious damsel, arguing for her mistress: but

[b] οἵη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοίηδε καὶ ἀνδρῶν.

she is a woman: and well she said, convicting herself, that those of her sex are all light and frivolous and flickering as the leaves of yonder bamboo that float on the passing breeze. Shall I allow virtue to women, who disallow it even in themselves? And he threw the flower from him into the pool, and went back into the temple with a ruffled heart, to mourn through the day, till the coming of night.

PÁTALÍ.

THEN he tossed all night on his bed of leaves, and rose before the sun, and went out and stood on the steps of the pool, watching the images of the last stars paling in the mirror of its water before the advent of the day. And he looked and lo! out of the trees again the *chéti* came towards him with twinkling feet, holding a trumpet-flower[•] in her hand. And she resembled the sky before the dawn, touched with the first streak of red. So she came up to the King, and stood near him, and said: O King, my mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy

[•] *Pátalí.* Its colour is pale red.

hands, a flower, and if his slumber has been sound it is well with her.

Then the King said: *Chétí*, how can he pass untroubled nights, whose memory is haunted by the injuries of a sex, even in thy opinion more frivolous than dry leaves? Then the *chétí* laughed. And she said: O King, I am young, yet am I older than thou art. Dost thou think so lightly of the actions of women, and yet recollect and attach weight to the words of one of the youngest of them? And the King was confused. And he said: Maiden, young certainly thou art, and yet already full of the delusive cunning of thy sex. And if such is the maid, what else can the mistress be? Then the *chétí* was delighted. And she exclaimed: She is a woman; is not that enough for thee? Are they not all without exception like bamboo leaves, frivolous, and like their stalks, hollow? And yet, judge not all flowers according to thy experience of the weed. For though I and others are but weeds, yet is my mistress like this glorious trumpet-flower. O King, art thou so simple, as to think that the Creator, who in making all flowers equally flowers, nevertheless gave to each its own peculiarity, was so left-handed as to make all women identical? Truly, thou art but a poor judge. For some, like this *pátalí*, are

glorious to look at, whereas others, like yesterday's mango, are loaded with fragrance. Like her, whose husband once went upon a journey and never returned. And year followed year, and still he never came. And every day in all those years she was pestered by suitors, that, attracted like bees by her beauty, came on ever more keenly the more she drove them away. Then one night she took a lamp, and filled it with oil, and a wick, and went down to the bank of Ganges, saying to herself: I will light it, and set it afloat upon the river. And the flame is the life of my husband. Therefore if it goes out, or sinks, I will also put an end to my life, since he will be dead. But if it floats, I will wait and endure, for I shall know that he will return. So she did. Now that night there was a high wind, which blew furiously; and the waves of Ganges were like those of the sea. But notwithstanding, she lit her lamp, and pushed it out upon the river: for her faith[d] was very strong. And at that moment the Sky, with all

[d] The reader unacquainted with Hindoo literature may possibly see in this a Christian idea; but it is not so: or rather it is far more Indian than Christian: and the original *bhakti* is stronger and far more intense in its meaning than our *faith*.

its myriad stars for eyes, was looking down at her. And when it saw her little lamp, it laughed in scorn: and said: See what a miserable taper yonder poor mortal woman calls a lamp! But Maheshwara heard the brag. And suddenly, by his power, he created a calm. Then the waves of Ganges sank to sleep, and on her[e] still bosom floated the little lamp, with a flame that never wavered: and in the silent mirror of her waters appeared another sky and other stars, in mimicry of those above. Then said the kindly God: Sky, seest thou yonder sky with all its stars below? And the Sky answered: Aye: but that sky with its stars is but an illusion. And Maheshwara laughed. And he said: Thou foolish Sky, know, that thou art thyself, with all thy stars, no less an illusion than is that other sky below. The sole reality of all is yonder little lamp, that floats midway, poised between the infinity above and that below. For it embodies the good quality[f] of a faithful wife.

[e] Because *Gangá* is a woman.

[f] Goodness, or *sattwa* (the noun, of which *satí*, a word familiar to all English readers in connection with widow burning, is the adjective) is one of the three great Qualities: *Passion* and *Darkness* being the other two. *Sattwa* alone is real: that which *is* (*sat*). But the play on *wife* and *goodness* cannot be rendered in English.

So the lamp floated on, till it went out of sight; and thereafter that woman regained her husband, by the favour of the God.

Then the *chéti* looked at the King steadily, and laid the flower at his feet, and went away. And the King looked after her, as she went: and stood meditating, long after she was gone. And then he stooped, and picked up the trumpet-flower. And he said: *Pátali*, exquisitely lovely is thy great crimson flower: and as for this strange maiden, surely Saraswati[g] dwells upon her tongue. But what of that? Is she not a woman? One of those who carry poison in their teeth under the honey in their lips. And he threw the flower, with his lips shut, into the pool, and went back to the temple with a sad heart, to mourn through the day and await the coming of the night.

JASMINE.

THEN he tossed all night on his bed of leaves, and in the morning rose, and went out upon the steps, just as the young sun was flooding with gold

[g] The goddess of eloquence.

the blue floor of the eastern sky. And as he stood watching, suddenly the *chéti* came again towards him with twinkling feet, holding a jasmine [h] blossom in her hand. And as he looked at her, the King was pleased, against his will: for she resembled in her movements an incarnation of the sap of the tree of youth. And she came up to the King, and looked at him with a smile, and said: O King, my mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if he has slumbered well during the night, it is also well with her.

Then the King smiled himself, and was angry that he did so. And he said: *Chéti*, how can he enjoy repose, that is compelled, against his will, to deal with such a sex as thine? For whether they are good or bad, either way they ruffle and destroy his peace of mind.

Then the *chéti* laughed. And she looked at the King with the laughter hanging in her subtle eyes: and said: O King, thou art gaining wisdom, by associating with those only that can teach it: for even I am not utterly devoid of the natural cleverness of my sex, though I am only just fifteen. And now I see, that thy opinion of us all is be-

[h] *Málati.*

ginning to waver: since to-day thou art willing to allow in some of us were it only the possibility of good. And I wonder, by what cause this sudden change can have been produced. And hearing her, the King was annoyed: for he had determined, that he would not take pleasure in conversing with her: and yet he could not help it. And he said: Of that which has not happened, there is no cause: and my opinions are to-day just what they were before, and so am I. But the *chéti* looked at him with a smile. And she said: Nay, it is not so: the outward signs are unmistakeable. I can read them on thee as if what was written there were only my own name. Then the King fell into the trap. And he said: And what, then, is thy name? The *chéti* said: I am called Madhupamanjarí[1]. And the King said: Thou art well named. Then she said: How canst thou tell? Dost thou know what I am like? Wilt thou judge the inside by the outside? Canst thou infer its delicious content from the rough and horrid jacket of the nut? Then the King smiled. And he said: Maiden, thy simile is not appropriate. What resemblance

[1] i.e. 'a cluster of blossoms for the honey drinkers,' the bees. (The fourth syllable rhymes with gun.)

is there, between the exterior of an ugly nut and thine? Then the *chéti* clapped her hands. And she exclaimed: O King, wilt thou never learn discretion? Hast thou so soon forgotten? Dost thou not know by experience that an outside, let it be never so sweet, may contain but a bitter juice within? Little canst thou estimate from my outside, what qualities there are within. And yet know, that if my mistress loves me better than all her other maids, it is not for my husk, but for my kernel. For I learned wisdom from a cunning master, and what I could teach thee, thou wouldst give much to know. And I could tell thee stories, that would make thee laugh at all thy trouble, and take thee to a land, of which thou hast never even dreamed. Where the trees have ever blossoms, and are noisy with the humming of intoxicated bees. Where by day, the suns are never burning, and by night, the moonstones ooze with nectar in the rays of the camphor laden moon. Where the blue lakes are filled with rows of silver swans, and where, on steps of lapis-lazuli, the peacocks dance in agitation at the murmur of the thunder in the hills. Where the lightning flashes without harming, to light the way to women, stealing in the darkness to meetings with their lovers,

and the rainbow hangs for ever like an opal on the dark blue curtain of the clouds. Where, on the moonlit roofs of crystal palaces, pairs of lovers laugh at the reflection of each other's lovesick faces in goblets of red wine: breathing as they drink air heavy with the fragrance of the sandal, wafted on the breezes from the mountain of the south: where they play and pelt each other with emeralds and rubies, fetched at the churning of the ocean from the bottom of the sea: where rivers, whose sands are always golden, flow slowly past long lines of silent cranes that hunt for silver fishes in the rushes on their banks: where men are true, and maidens love for ever, and the lotus never fades.

And as he listened, tears started from the eyes of the King. And he exclaimed: Aye! maiden, take me, if thou canst, to the land where love grows never old. But the *chétí* looked at him with kind eyes. And she laid the jasmine blossom at his feet, and turned, and went away quickly through the trees: while the King watched her, till she vanished from his sight. And then he stooped and picked up the jasmine flower. And he said: *Málatí*, thy fragrance is sweet beyond comparison, and yet it is not so delicious as the music of this

little maiden's voice. And yet alas! she is a woman Out, out upon these women! For I thought I had succeeded in uprooting the very seeds of their attraction from my heart: and now there comes this pretty *chéti*, and destroys all my operations with a few honied words breathed through the door of her cunning scented lips. Then he looked at the flower, and the pool. And he said: Flower, I will not throw thee away till thou art faded, for that would be a shame. And he went back to the temple, with the flower in his hand, divided in his mind between the recollection of the *chéti* and the recollection of his grief.

A FLOWERLESS DAWN.

THEN he tossed all night upon his bed of leaves, and in the morning he rose, and went out upon the steps, and stood on the edge of the pool, listening to the birds in the trees beginning to awake, and salute by their songs the advent of the lord of the day. And as he stood, he looked along the edge of the pool, and through the trees, but he saw no *chéti* coming towards him, and he remained alone with the pool and its lotuses and the trees.

Then after a while he said to himself: Doubtless she has fallen asleep, or risen late, or it may be that her mistress required her services: or possibly she could not find a flower. But the day grew older, and still she did not come. And at last, he said to himself: What is it to me, whether she comes or does not come? Are not these trees, and this pool, still what they were, before she came into the wood? and can I not pass my day with them for my companions, as I did before? So he wandered up and down on the edge of the pool. But no matter what he did, his eyes, as if in spite of him, kept looking to the quarter from which she was accustomed to appear.

And then at last, he said to himself: Something is surely wanting, this morning, to the beauty of this wood: and yet it is very strange. For here are the trees, and the temple, and the pool with its lotuses, and the dawn: and nothing is other than it was, save that the *chéti* and her flower have not come. Nothing is gone, but a woman and a flower. And can it be, that their absence alone should make such a difference to the wood? Then he sat down on the steps, and gazed into the pool. And he said: Aye! but the flower was very sweet. And the woman? Nay! she is not a woman, but

a child. And yet again, no, rather is she poised, like dusk, and like dawn, on the boundary of two conditions, sharing the beauty and qualities of both, and yet possessing a third belonging to neither. For she is half a child and half a woman, and she resembles those flowers that she carries in her hand, buds newly opened in the dawn. And like them, she carries with her a fragrance of her own, yet in this she is superior, that she possesses motion and a voice: while they are silent, and rooted to the ground. And the sight of her coming towards me in the morning with nimble feet that seem as if they were rejoicing, wrapped in her dark blue mantle that like the mist upon a mountain only renders more beautiful the outline of that which it ineffectually conceals, lingers in the recesses of my eye, and refuses to disappear: and like one that has loitered on the hills in the season of the rains, the noise of the murmur of her voice hangs like that of water in my ear, and mixes with the silence of the wood. O! there is magic in the music of her voice, for it is low, and sweeter than honey[k], and carries in it whispers that snare and

[k] Kalidas, who was a judge in these matters, resembled Shakspeare in his love for the low and gentle voice (*walguwák*)

take prisoner the listening soul, and distract it from attending to the meaning of her words. And even now, it rustles in my memory like a breeze in the branches of a young bamboo, which sigh and ring with its echo, even after it is gone. For, alas! it is gone, and now I must wait till to-morrow before it comes again. And yet, who knows? for something may prevent her from returning, and to-morrow again she may be absent, just as she was to-day. And he spent that day in wandering about, dissatisfied, and hoping for the morrow, and yet fearing, lest even then she should not reappear.

CHAMPAK.

Then all night long, he tossed on his bed of leaves, and in the morning he arose very early, long before the sun, and went out upon the steps, and stood waiting. And he looked up, and saw in the air high above him a row of swans, flying swiftly to the north, with bodies that gleamed ruddy in the beams of the day-star still hidden behind the eastern mountain. And then at last the sun rose, and at that moment he looked, and

saw the *chétí* once more coming rapidly towards him. And she seemed in his eyes like an incarnation of the dew of the morning, and like an emblem of the love that was rising from its ashes in his own heart, embodied in a feminine form. And she carried in her hand a champak flower; and she came up to the King, perfuming the air, and said: O King, my mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if he has enjoyed good repose, it is well with her.

Then the King said: Dear *chétí*, how can he enjoy repose, whose friends desert him? And she said: O King, if his friends abandon him, the fault is his own, who had not discrimination sufficient to discern the false from the true. And the King sighed. And he said: Alas! it is hard to tell. And they are few who in this world of illusion can detect and distinguish between the good and the bad. For baseness assumes innumerable disguises, and can present itself even under a form like thine. Then she said with a smile: O King, be not too sure in my case. And the King said: I am sure of nothing, but this: that life is worthless when love is gone. And she said: That cannot go, which was never present, and love cannot have left thee, which thou hast never known. And the King said

in astonishment: And dost thou know anything of love, that art but a child? Then she looked at him awhile in silence. And then she said: O King, this is a matter neither of youth nor age, but of inheritance and recollection. For as a rule, men learn only by experience, and get it only when their hair is grey. But there are some, whose memories are very strong, and they carry with them knowledge that never leaves them, from one birth to the next; and are wise, by reason of the influences[1] that come down to them out of the oblivion of the past. And of these, know that I am one. And what though I am, as thou sayest, but a child: yet in such a case as this, a child may be wiser than a king: and it may be, that I am wiser even than thou art. For I worshipped in a former birth the God of the flowery-bow, and learned from his favour secrets, which have bequeathed to me impressions even in this birth. And now I will tell thee a little of what thou dost not know. Love is a triple cord[m]. And when all

[1] Nothing is more universally distributed throughout Hindoo literature than this idea of the overpowering influences of transmitted reminiscences and consequences from previous births. It is only a profound truth in a mythological form.

[m] There is a play on words here which cannot be translated,

three strands are firmly bound together, then nothing can break or end it, not even death. But if either of the three be taken by itself, then it snaps under the pressure of the circumstances and trials of life. And thus it was with thee. In thy case, the three were not combined: and thy love was a unison and not a harmony. And the King said: And what, then, are the three? Then she said: Three kinds of love must meet together, to make up that which is perfect and complete: that of the body, and that of the intellect, and that of the soul. And thus it can exist, only between a woman and a man. For each sex cares only for the beauty of the other, and is unconscious of its own: and unless there is a difference of sex, there is no bodily attraction, and thus one element is wanting. And she, that is to retain her lover's love for ever, must possess, first, a body without a flaw, or his senses will stray from her to other bodies; for it is their nature to seek their proper object: and secondly, intelligence, or his esteem will depart elsewhere: and thirdly, goodness, or his soul will abandon her, in the search for that without which

for *guna* means not only a *cord* or *string*, but also a moral *quality* or *virtue*: and yet again, a *power* or *multiple*.

it cannot do, and without which, the other two component parts are worthless, except for a time. And as it is with the woman, so is it for the man, with this difference, that their bodies and their intelligences and their souls are totally unlike. For that which is virtue in a woman, may be its opposite in a man, and his weakness may be her strength, and even her ornament. But thou wert foolish, in not wisely choosing the proper object of thy love. For doubtless she was beautiful, but that was all: and now it was surely a good for thee, and no harm, that she betrayed thee when she did. For though thou didst receive at the moment a wound sharper than a sword; yet time, and it may be, circumstance, will heal it: and certainly time would have shown thee in her case, that elements were wanting to the perfection of thy love, and it would not have endured. And now thou art free, and punished for thy error, and wiser: and it befits thee rather to rejoice than mourn. For who knows what awaits him in the future? and who can expect to achieve the highest good[a] who does not know what it is like? And thou wilt find, no doubt, the perfect trinity of love with my mistress, for I would hope that she is worthy of thee.

[a] *purushárta*—'the goal of man.'

And as she spoke, the King stood spell-bound. But as she ended, he started and exclaimed : Away ! speak not of thy mistress, for she is a matter of policy and statecraft : tell me only of thyself : for surely thou art furnished with cords ° strong enough to make the love of thee immortal, and bind thy lover to thee with a knot that will never break. But the *chétí* put her finger on her lip. And she shook her pretty head at the King, and said : Hush ! speak not thus to me, or I shall not come again. And she looked at him with a smile, and laid the flower at his feet, and turned and went away. But just before she disappeared, she turned round, and looked at the King, and then she entered the trees and vanished from his eyes.

And the King stooped and picked up the flower, and put it to his lips. And he sighed, and said : Champak, thy odour is like the very essence of the fragrance of love, and well is it suited to the words of this irresistible maiden, who resembles that self-same essence incarnated by the will of the Creator, in a wholly different, yet equally delicious form. And he went back to the temple with the flower in his hand, buried in meditation on the words of

° Here again *cords* = ***virtues.***

Madhupamanjarí and utterly oblivious of all else. For her beauty, like a cunning painter effacing one picture to make room for another, had obliterated every stain left by gloomy recollections on the surface of his soul.

LOTUS.

THEN all night long, he slept profoundly on his bed of leaves, and rose only when the sun had arisen. And when he went out, he found the *chétí* standing waiting for him on the edge of the pool, with a red lotus in her hand. And she seemed in his eyes like the peace of his own mind embodied in a visible form. And as he went towards her, she looked up, and said: My mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if his slumbers have been sweet, it is well with her.

Then the King said: Dear *chétí*, he sleeps well who regains his tranquillity: and by thy favour I have slept this night as I have not slept for many. And she said: Whence has come this new tranquillity? And the King laughed, and said: A skilful physician administered to me yesterday a drowsy drug. Then she said: They are for

tunate, who possess skilful physicians, for they are few. Then he said: The drug that brought me sleep was compounded of the murmur of thy voice and the nectar of the sight of thee. And I begin to hope that a cure may be effected, for formerly I thought my case desperate. Then Madhupamanjarí began to laugh. And she exclaimed: O King, beware! Was it not but a day or two ago that thou wast bringing charges of variability against the whole race of woman? And now art thou not becoming amenable to the same charge? Then the King said: Thou malicious *chétí*, thou knowest well that thou art saying what is not the truth, solely to torment me. Then she said: Nay, but thou appearest to me closely to resemble the fisherman, who lived formerly, in another age and country, by catching fish. And one day he threw his net into the sea, and there came up in it a beautiful fish of gold. Then he drew it up, filled with joy. But just as he was going to take it into his hand, it jumped back into the sea. Then he shed tears of despair, and abandoning the sea, was ready to abandon the body. And he exclaimed: Alas! my life is over, for it was wrapped up in that fish of gold. Nevertheless, after a while, he went back to the sea, and threw in his net again:

and there came up a fish of silver. And instantly he forgot his fish of gold, and eagerly stretched out his hand to take the fish of silver. But that also slid from his hand into the sea. And again he gave himself up to despair, and quitted the shore, and spent his time in bewailing his loss. Yet after awhile, he came back again to the sea. And he threw in his net, and lo! there came up a common fish, made of the ordinary flesh of fish; and he took it in his hand and carried it away, and was perfectly happy, and he utterly forgot the fish of gold, and the fish of silver, as if they had never been.

Then the King said: Dear *chétt*, I would be angry with thee, if I could, for thy roguery in comparing me to such a vile fisherman. And she said: O King, beware! lest the parallel should turn out to be exact. Then the King said: Thou mayst liken me rather to a fire which was all but extinguished, and could not be rekindled, disdaining as it did every species of common fuel: till they offered it a piece of heavenly sandal, of which even that that grows on Malaya is but a poor copy. And then it blazed up from its ashes with a pure flame, such as it had never put forth before.

Then she said: King, it is time for me to go.

And she laid the lotus at his feet, and went away, but she turned and looked back at him, before she disappeared among the trees. And the King picked up the lotus, and said: Lotus, said I well, that I was fire, and she the fuel? Or is it not rather I that am the fuel, and she that is the fire? For certainly she burns me like a flame, even more, now that she is absent, than when she was here. Therefore, O thou red lotus, I will carry thee about all day, since thou resemblest a piece of herself that she has left behind, to cool me in the hot noon of her absence like a lump of snow. And he went back to the temple, with the lotus in his hand, feeding on the future, and forgetful of the past.

SHRÍPHALA.

Then he dreamed of Madhupamanjarí, all night long, and in the morning he rose before the sun, and went out. And as he stood listening to the joyous cries of the *chakrawáka* and his mate, meeting in the morning after a night of separation, the *chétí* came towards him through the trees, holding in her hand berries of the *shríphala*. And she said: My mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy

hands, berries, and if he has enjoyed sweet sleep, it is well with her.

Then the King said: Dear *chétí*, I cannot tell whether I slept last night or lay awake: this only I know, that all night I listened to thy voice and gazed at thee: but whether it was a dream or not, I cannot tell. Then she looked at him with mock gravity; and said: These are symptoms very dangerous and alarming to the physician. Thy case is parlous, and very similar to that of the madman who was enamoured of a stone. Then he said: Pretty *chétí*, I see no resemblance whatever between a stone and thee. And she said: I can be to thee no more than a stone was to him. And the King said: Tell me his story, for I care not whether it be like my own, or not: and in the meantime I will watch thee, and listen to thy voice. Then she said: Know that there was a king, who hunting in the forest came to an ancient temple, and on its wall was a stone image of the goddess of beauty. And the instant his eye fell on it, he fell in love with it so violently, that he could not tear himself away from it. Then sending for workmen, he caused them to extract the image from the wall; and carrying it away with him, he had it set up in a room in his palace. And night and day he lived before it,

never taking his eyes off it: and he used to kiss it, and caress it, and upbraid it for not returning his caresses. And one night, as he lay asleep, he thought he saw the goddess come down to him out of the wall, no longer made of stone, but warm and living flesh and blood. But just as he was going to clasp her in his arms, almost beside himself for joy, suddenly a watchman in the street shouted and awoke him. Then in his fury, the king instantly put the watchman to death, and banished every watchman in the city. And he spent the remainder of his life vainly trying to recover in his dreams the conclusion of his meeting with the goddess, and yet he never could succeed: and he was filled with contempt for everything that happened when he was awake, saying to himself: This whole world is like the stone, a mere lifeless copy of that real original which I found that time, by the favour of the deity, in my dream. And surely he is mad, who pursues all his life a thing inaccessible to him even in a dream: and such am I to thee; and thou will surely resemble him, if forgetting my mistress, thou allowest thy fancy to fix on an object forbidden to thee. O King, is it not true, and is not the comparison exact?

Then the King said: I do not know: I have not heard thy tale; for I was wholly occupied in watching thy lips, and I marvel, that I never noticed them before. Tell me again, and I will shut my eyes; so that thy beauty shall not interfere, and keep me from comprehending the meaning of thy words. And she laughed, and said: Surely I am right, and thy wits are deserting thee. And she laid the berries at his feet, and went away, without looking back, and was lost among the trees. But the King stooped, and picked up the berries. And he said: Berries, ye are well named [p]. Did ye acquire merit in a former birth, that ye were privileged to be plucked from the tree and carried in her hand, while your brothers and sisters were left disconsolate and unhappy on the tree? And he went back to the temple, holding them in his hand, haunted by the memory of her lips, whose colour they resembled, to wait for another dawn.

[p] *Shríphala:* i.e. the fruit of the goddess of beauty and good fortune.

SHIRÍSHA.

And they hovered before him, as he slept all night on his bed of leaves, and in the morning he rose before the sun, and went out and stood on the brink of the pool. And as he gazed at its surface, which was dotted with lotuses like a panther's skin, there entered into his heart a doubt, like the shadow of the bats that were taking their last flight over the water before the dawn. And he said to himself: O, she is beautiful, but alas! she is a woman: have I done well in allowing her to steal entrance like these bats, into my heart. And that instant, he saw her coming towards him, with a *shirísha* flower in her hand. And she came to him, and said: My mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if he has enjoyed sweet slumbers, it is well with her.

And the King looked for a moment at the smile that sat like sunlight on her lips; and he said with a sigh: Dear *chéti*, how can he sleep well, who doubts and fears? For I am about to put out again upon the sea, on which I have already made shipwreck. Blue, blue is the sea, and soft and calm its waves, and smiling, and yet so it was before, when it betrayed me. And shall I trust my little

bark on it again? Then she looked at him awhile, with sorrow and reproach in her eyes. And she said: Doomed is the double mind, and he that cannot venture, for want of courage or of trust, can never win return. Not for him the treasures that lurk in the bosom of the sea, where monsters roam, and jewels lie, and sea nymphs dwell. For once upon a time, there was a merchant's son, who set out in a ship to go on a trading journey to a distant land. And he sailed for many a *yojana* over the billowy waves, till at length he came to the very middle of the sea. Then suddenly the wind fell, and the sails hung idle on the yards, and the ship stopped. And out of the green and heaving sea there rose before him a tree of coral; and on a branch of that tree there sat a maiden of the sea: and the foam of the sea dripped from her limbs, and sat like pearls upon her breasts, and fell like cream into the water, and her long hair lay on the waves that surged beneath her like her own breast. And she called to the merchant's son: Jump into the sea, and come and live with me, and I will give thee jewels such as no merchant ever saw, and surfeit thee with pleasures such as never mortal tasted yet. Then that coward merchant's soul was balanced between his longing for that heavenly maiden and

his fear of the waves. And he looked and longed to jump, but did not dare. And then in a moment that fair tree and its lovely burden sank back into the sea and disappeared, and he was left alone, with the water and the sky. Then he continued his journey, filled with unavailing regret, and presently there arose a storm, and it sank his ship into the sea, and he was drowned. Thus he lost his treasure, and yet for all that did not even save his worthless life from the very danger that he feared. And, O King, this life is fleeting, and more unstable than the waves of ocean that it resembles. And what does it contain that should make it worth a hero's while to balance for a moment between losing it, and winning what fortune only offers once in any life, and often not at all?

Then she laid the *Shirísha* flower at the King's feet, and turned and went away, slowly, and was lost among the trees. And the King stooped and picked up the flower. And he said: O *Shirísha*, woe to thee, lovely as thou art, for thou art the bringer of unhappiness. Now have I offended my beloved *chéti* by betraying unworthy suspicion. But ah! she is a woman. Why did not Maheshwara lift her out of the category of women, and place her in a species by herself, that I might not remem-

ber when I gaze at her imperfections that are inseparable from all her sex but her? And he went back to the temple, with the flower in his hand, angry with himself, and more in love with the *chéti* than before.

KADAMBA.

And he lay all night on his bed of leaves, repenting of his doubts: and in the morning he arose before the sun, and went out, and watched the eastern sky changing colour like an opal as the night drove away before the dawn: but the *chéti* never came. And as the day grew older, the King grew paler, for he said: Can it be that she means to leave me another day alone? And then at last, when the sun was already high in the heaven, he looked, and saw her coming slowly towards him, with a purple flower of the *Kadamba* in her hand. And she seemed in his eyes like the nectar of reconciliation in feminine form. And she came up to him and said: My mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if his slumbers have been light, it is well with her.

Then the King said: Dear *chétt*, how can he sleep who waits to be forgiven for a sin committed? And she said: What is that? The King said: My bark is launched, and long ago floating on the very middle of the sea. Nothing now is wanting, save the lady of the coral tree, to bid me to jump into the water. Then she looked at him with joy dancing in her eyes: but she said: O King, such maidens are very rare, rarer even than the trees on which they grow. And much I fear, that thou hast launched thy little boat in vain, and will have to content thee with a more earthly mistress, such as mine. Then the King said: Tell me not of thy mistress, for I will not listen. Then she said: Nay, but surely thou art curious to learn at least what she is like. She is far more beautiful than I, and she is tall. Then the King said: If she is taller than thou art, she is too tall. Then she said: Moreover, she is skilled in poetry. And the King said: I love not ladies that are pundits. Then she said: She dances and sings like an Apsaras in Indra's hall. And the King said: I care for the dancing of no feet, save that of thine as they come towards me; and for no music, save that of thy voice, which is more delightful in my ear than the murmur of the bees. And as he spoke,

a bee, attracted by the flower in her hand, flew to it, and entered it. Then she closed the petals quickly with her hand, and said: O King, I have him here a prisoner, to convict thee of thy madness. Listen, and tell me if thou canst, without deceiving, which is the sweeter, the real bee, or that voice of mine which thou dost liken to its humming? And the King put his ear close to the flower, and heard the bee inside: and he said: I cannot tell. And he fixed his eyes upon her face, and said: Now speak, that I may judge between him and thee. Then she laughed, and let go the flower, and the bee flew away. And the King exclaimed: Alas! the bee is mad, not I. For who would willingly quit a prison compounded of a flower and thy hand, which is itself a flower? Give it me that I may compare them. But she said: Nay; the flower is thine own, for it was a present from my mistress: but my hand is mine, and now I must return to her. And as she spoke, the bee came again, and buzzed about her head. And she exclaimed in terror: O King, this villain of a bee will sting me. And the King said: Doubtless: he has come to avenge himself for his imprisonment. Then she ran in agitation almost into the King's arms, exclaiming: O King, protect her who comes

to thee for refuge [q]. And in his delight, the King exclaimed: O King of bees, come thou to me, and in return for the favour thou hast done me, I will serve thee with honey in lotus cups all day. But in the meanwhile the bee flew away. And Madhupamanjarí started back in confusion, and said: O King, my mistress is brave, and not afraid of bees. Then the King said, with emphasis: Out upon all women, that do not fear bees! But, O Bee Blossom [r], surely this bee is to be excused, if he mistook thy lips for a flower.

Then she said: O King, this unmannerly bee has disgraced me in thine eyes, and caused me to forget the reserve of a maiden: and now it is time that I were gone. And she laid the flower at the King's feet, and ran away without looking behind her, and vanished in the trees. But the King stooped and picked up the flower. And he said: O glorious flower, I will preserve thee for ever, even after thou art faded: for thou wast the occasion of the onslaught of this incomparable bee, which led my dear *chéti* to forget her caution and

[q] This is a formula. The special business of kings was like that of the knight in the Middle Ages, to protect the distressed (*sharanágata*).

[r] He plays upon her name: see n. p. 23.

take refuge in my arms. O beauty, thou art irresistible above all, because thou art weak! Out, out upon all kings' daughters that are not afraid of bees! And he went back to the temple, kissing the *Kadamba* flower, and intoxicated with delight.

AMARANTH.

And all night, he slept with the *Kadamba* flower on his bed of leaves: and in the morning he went out, and watched the fire-flies on the pool hastening to hide their lamps before they should be shamed by the coming of the Great Lamp of day. And presently the *chétí* came towards him, holding in her hand an amaranth[8]. And she looked like an incarnation of the essence of timidity, blushing at the recollection of the adventure of the day before. And she came up to the King, and said: O King, my mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if his slumber has been peaceful, it is well with her.

Then the King said: Dear *chétí*, he sleeps well.

[8] *Kurabaka:* it has a crimson flower.

who has not to reproach himself with withholding succour from the suppliant. Then she dropped her eyes upon the ground. And the King looked at her with affection, and he said: Dear *chétí*, do not be ashamed: for thy case was perilous. Moreover, I took no advantage of thee in thy distress. But nevertheless, could I discover that bee, I would intoxicate him with nectar, till he could not fly. Then she said: And what, if he had stung me? Then the King said: *Chétí*, had the villain stung thee, I would have bound him with cobwebs, and thrown him before an elephant. Then she laughed, and said: Poor bee! the punishment would have exceeded his crime. But enough of him! Let me rather continue to enlighten thee as to the virtues of my mistress. Then the King said hastily: O thou tormenter, wilt thou never cease to remind me of thy mistress? O that I were not a King, to endure by reason of policy queens that I do not want! Or why art thou not thy mistress, and she the maid? For as it is, I see before me nothing but despair. Then she said: O King, despair is unavailing. And even greater obstacles than these have been surmounted by others, by the favour of Ganesha and their own determination. Did not Wishwamitra by resolution long ago become a

Brahman? Then the King said with a sigh: O my dear *chétí*, I am in misery, and instead of consoling me, thou mockest me with old legends that are not to the point. And she said: O King, some surmount obstacles, and some faint and die before shadows, which seem to be but are not really obstacles at all. For once there was a full moon. And looking for lotuses to love, he peered curiously into a forest pool. Now in that pool there was a pure white lotus, growing in the black mud. But that day there had come down to the pool two male elephants; and they fought in the pool, and struck their tusks into each other's sides, and their red blood streamed into the pool, and fell upon the lotus, and turned its petals red. So when the moon looked down into the pool, he exclaimed: Alas! it is only a red lotus, and not a bride for me[t]. So he pined away in sorrow, and night after night he grew thinner and thinner, and at last his emaciation became such that he vanished altogether, and ceased to exist. And then on the dark night that precedes the new moon, the clouds assembled in masses; and there fell a furious rain into the

[t] The white lotus (*kumuda*) is the proper moon-lotus, the others are apparently all devoted to the sun.

pool, and it washed the lotus clean. And when the new moon stole into the pool, lo! he saw to his delight a pure white lotus, with a rain-drop shining on its leaf, like a tear of joy at his approach[u].

Then the King said: O, that I were that moon, and thou my lotus: then would my nights pass like an instant of delight, and not hang over me, as now they do, black with the hours of separation. But she laid the amaranth at his feet, and went away: and turned, before she vanished in the trees, and then became invisible. And the King stooped, and picked up the flower. And he said: Amaranth, gladly would I stain thee, as those mad elephants did the lotus, with my blood, could it avail: yet even so, I could not make thy colour redder than it is. And he went back to the temple, with the amaranth in his hand, sad at heart, foreseeing the conflict of his honour with his love.

[u] The King did not understand her, for love is blind.

ASHÓKA.

THEN all night long, he lay tossing on his bed of leaves. And in the morning he rose before the sun, and went out and stood before the pool, and watched the parrots screaming in the *ashwattha* tree, with beaks that were tipped with the colour of the dawn: till he saw the *chétí* coming towards him with twinkling feet, holding an *ashóka* flower in her hand. And she seemed in his eyes *like a draught of the nectar of love longing incarnate in a feminine form* [x]. And she came up to the King and said: My mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if his slumbers have been sweet, it is well with her.

Then the King said: Dear *chétí*, can he sleep well, whose night is passed in longing for the morn? Alas! why is it not always dawn? for see, at dawn, how all the lotuses turn golden in the sun, and thou art here. Could not Maheshwara of his omnipotence strike Súrya with his trident, and fix him

[x] These are the expressions that are the despair of the translator. So simple, so beautiful, so pithy in the original: so roundabout and clumsy in a language whose genius is altogether different (*múrtámaut-sukyamádanám*).

in the sky, over the eastern mountain: so would the lotuses be always golden, and thou wouldst be always here. Then she said: O King, they come to evil ends who long for the impossible. As, long ago, did he, who coveted the Spinners of the Sun. For once there was a gambler, who having lost everything at play was wandering about the world, and by chance came upon an Apsaras asleep. But as he ran at her, she woke up, and sprang into the air and vanished: but he caught her by the foot, and she left her golden sandal in his hand. Then she began to wheedle and cajole him, saying: Give me back my sandal, for without it I cannot go to Indra's hall, and to-night I have to dance there without fail. Then he said: I will give it back only if thou wilt carry me to heaven, and let me see thee dancing. So finding no escape, the Apsaras carried him to heaven, hidden in a flower in her ear. And he saw all the Apsarases dancing in golden robes, like a bed of golden lotuses all waving in the wind. Then filled with greed, he said to her, whispering into her ear: Whence come your golden robes? And she said: They are made for us by the Spinners of the Sun, who dwell beyond the eastern mountain. And every night they sit and spin the hair of his old rays into

gold, combing it out of his head, after he has washed in the lakes of liquid amethyst that lie hidden in that mountain, where it is always dawn, and never either dusk, or night, or noon. But when the gambler heard her, insatiable desire filled his greedy soul. And he began to shout and bawl: Hey! for the gold: hey! for the Spinners. And Indra said: Who is that making discords in heaven, and throwing out the dancers? So they hunted about, and found him hidden in the flower in her ear. Then Indra said to Mátali: Turn this rascal out of heaven, and with him the impudent Apsaras who has dared to smuggle him into heaven in her ear. So Mátali threw them out. But the gambler, not being a sky-goer, fell down to earth and was broken to pieces.

So King, beware! lest by coveting the impossible thou shouldst lose thy heaven altogether. And she laid the *ashóka* flower at the King's feet, and turned to go. Then the King said: Alas! dear *chéti*, canst thou not stay longer? And she said: No. Then he said: Then canst thou not come twice or three times in the day? For the days are long, and thou art here but for a moment: and between every two days there is a night. Then she said: O King, covet not the impossible: for where my mistress is,

I must be too: and now I have duties to perform And she went away through the trees, looking back over her shoulder at the King, till she disappeared. Then the King stooped and picked up the flower. And he said: *Ashóka*, thou dost torture me exactly like the provoking *chétí* who conveyed thee: for thy beauty is such, that I cannot bear to throw thee away, and yet thou dost not cease to remind me of my obligation to her mistress. And he went back to the temple, with the *ashóka* in his hand, and the image of Madhupamanjarí in his heart.

PALÁSHA.

And he lay all night, tossing on his bed of leaves. and in the morning, he arose before the sun, and stood sadly, plunged in meditation, like a crane, on the edge of the pool. And he never noticed how the *chétí* came towards him, till he looked up, and saw her standing beside him, with a red *Palásha* flower in her hand. Then she said: O King, my mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if his sleep has been sound, it is well with her.

Then the King said: Dear *chétí*, sleep, like a jealous rival, has taken offence at thy frequent visits to me, and will not come near me. And she said, with a smile: O King, let her not be angry, for soon will my visits cease. Then the King cried out: Ah! say not so: thou hast uttered the very secret of my heart. For I must ere long celebrate this hateful marriage with thy mistress, for to keep her waiting any longer would not be polite. And then, alas! what will become of me and thee? Thy visits will cease, and if thy mistress should suspect me, she might put thee to death. Then the *chétí* said: Nay, not so: for my mistress wishes well, both to thee and to me. And I fear, lest when thou knowest her, it may turn out wholly otherwise; and thou wilt rather forget the *chétí* for the mistress. Then the King exclaimed: Be the sun my witness, that I will not. Rather will I send her back to her father. Let him do what he will: let him take my kingdom, and add it to his own: I care not, so that he only leave me this wood and its pool, and thee for its visitor in the morning. And she looked at him with a smile: and said: O King, these are but idle words. And well do I know, that thou wilt never send her back. Then the King said: *Chétí*, I will

Then she said: Nay, that were to deceive her, and break thy own word. And deception is base, but fidelity is good. Moreover, she is a deposit[1] in thy hands. And know, that once there was a merchant, who possessed a great pearl, such that the hand could hardly grasp it: and it resembled a mass of sea-foam, collected into a ball in the light of the moon on an ocean shell, under the constellation *Swáti*. And it was famous throughout the kingdom. Then having to go on a journey, he went to a brother merchant, and gave it to him, saying: This is a deposit with thee, till I return. So he said: Very well: go without fear. And the merchant departed. But the other buried the pearl in the ground. Then the King came to him and said: Give me the pearl which was deposited with thee, and I will enrich thee: if not, I will take it by force. Then the merchant said: What wilt thou take, to wait for a week: for I love to look at it? The King said: For one crore[2], I will wait for one week. So the merchant gave him a crore. Then after a week, the King came

[1] This idea of a 'deposit' constantly recurs in Hindoo poetry.

[2] About a million sterling, when the rupee was equal to a florin.

again, and said: Give me now the pearl. And the merchant bought from him the delay of another week for another crore. And so he did, till after a while his wealth was exhausted, and he was a beggar. Then the King said: Give me now the pearl. Then the merchant said: King, I have a daughter, fairer by far than all thy queens. Take her, and sell me, for her, another week. So the King did. And then he came again: and said: Give me now the pearl. Then the merchant said: Take my life, and sell me for it yet another week; and when that is ended, take the pearl, and promise to put me to death. So the King said: Very well. Then after three days, the owner of the pearl returned. And he came and asked for his pearl: and the other gave it to him, and said: Thou art returned in good time: here is thy deposit; and all is well. And then he went to the King, and said: O King, the owner of the pearl has returned: and I have restored to him his own: and here I am. Then said the King: Thou art the pearl for whom I have been waiting. And now thou shalt marry my daughter, and recover thy own, as pure as when I took her; for she was thy deposit in my hands: and my kingdom and all my affairs shall be in thine.

Then she laid the flower at the King's feet, and went away. But the King stood and watched her as she went, till she passed out of his sight. And then he stooped and took up the flower. And he said : O flower of the Dhák, thou art a deposit in my hands. How shall I do without her? or how retain her and my honour, for they are incompatible? And he went back to the temple with the flower in his hand, striving to discover some way of escape from the dilemma, but in vain.

SHAMÍ.

And he lay all night, tossing on his bed of leaves : and in the morning, he rose before the sun, and went out. And as he stood watching the fish, raising their silver heads from the water to nibble the lotus stalks, he saw the *chétí* coming towards him, with a yellow flower of the *shamí* in her hand : and she resembled the very creeper itself, gifted with the power of motion. Then she came up to the King, and said : O King, my mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if his slumber has been sweet, it is well with her.

Then the King said : Dear *chétí*, how can he sleep

who sees just before him the end of his life? And she said: O King, is thy life so sweet to thee? Surely this very moon was new, when life was yet a thing of no value in thy eyes? Then the King said: Aye! but then I had never seen thy face. And the *chétí* laughed, and said: O King, but am I not a woman? And what are women in thy eyes? Then he said: What thou art, I care not: sure I am, that thou art not a woman. Or if thou art a woman, the Creator has surely formed two species of thy kind: in one, he put all other women; and in the other, thee alone. And she looked at him, with mischief in her eyes. And she said: And in which class did he place my mistress? But the King exclaimed: Out on thee, thou marble-hearted *chétí!* Canst thou not allow me to forget but for a moment, what I remember but too well? Then she said: But, O King, thou dost not well. Wilt thou leave my mistress for ever awaiting thy pleasure in this matter of thy marriage? And the King winced at her words, like a noble horse touched by the whip. And he said: *Chétí*, poison not the nectar of my dawn. Only too well I know that thou art right, and that my behaviour in this matter is not that of a gentleman[a]. And yet, for this,

[a] *anárya*: an exact equivalent.

thou art thyself to blame; and so is she. Could she not have chosen some other than thyself to do her errand? And yet, out on her, if she had! Then should I have missed the very kernel of the fruit of my birth. Alas! whichever way she chose, it was my ruin. Then said the *chétí*: That which is to be is known only to the deity. But thy duty to the Queen is very plain. And the King sighed. And he said: Hard is thy heart, and very fair thy form: sweet is thy voice, and bitter are thy words. To-morrow, I will do thy bidding and my duty, and pay a visit to the Queen, and consult with the astrologers and fix a day for the ceremony. But O! to-day let me see thee and hear thee to the full. Stay with me till the evening, that I may draw from thee strength to nerve me for the morrow.

Then she looked at him awhile, with kindly eyes: and then she said: O King, that which is written on the future by the deity, no man can erase, and no wisdom can avert. For once there was a king, with many queens. And among these, there was one, whose name was Shrí[b]; and the name was not appropriate, for she was the least beautiful of all.

[b] The goddess of beauty.

But she was gentle, and small, and she thought nothing of herself: and the king loved her so passionately, that he would have given his kingdom, and his life, and all the riches of the three worlds, to save one hair from falling from her head. Now it happened, that one day a criminal was apprehended in a crime: and the king gave orders that he should instantly be put to death: and it was done. Then after a while, the priests came to him and said: O King, this man, that thy order put to death, was a Brahman [c]; and the gods are angry. And now, thy life and thy kingdom are in jeopardy: and unless they are appeased with a sacrifice, the gods will destroy us all. Then the king said: What sacrifice is necessary? And they said: That of the queen that loves thee, and that thou lovest best. Then terror came into the king's heart. And he lied: and said: She of all my queens that loves me, and that I love, best, is Priyadar-

[c] The most frightful penalties are laid, in Manu, upon those who slew Brahmans: under no circumstances whatever could the King put them to death. (It is a total misapprehension to ascribe these, and similar regulations, as is so often done, to the cunning and policy of the Brahmans. They were the repository of the religious welfare of the State, and they shared the superstition which made the killing of them a crime.) See e.g. Moore's Pantheon, p. 373.

shiní: and alas! she is the most beautiful of all. So they said: Very well. To-morrow morning, the sacrifice shall be performed. And they went away. And in the morning, all the people assembled in a vast crowd around the sacrificial stone, and the king sat near, upon his throne. And they led up the victim, covered with a veil: and the officiating priest stood ready with a knife. Then they took off the veil from the victim, and uncovered her: and the king looked, and saw, not Priyadarshiní, but Shrí.

And then, in agony, he bounded on his throne. And the world vanished from his sight, and he waved his hands, not knowing what he did. And he cried out, with a voice like a trumpet: Ah no! ah no! not Shrí: not Shrí. But the priest raised the knife. And as he did so, it caught in his garments, and fell to the ground. And in a moment he regained it, and raised it, and struck. But in that instant, the king threw himself like a tiger upon the body of his wife. And the knife fell, and pierced his heart.

And then Shrí rose, from under the body of the king. And she looked for a moment at the crowd around her, and sat down upon the ground, and took the king's head upon her lap, and fell upon

it, and followed him into the other world. Then dead silence fell upon the people, and they waited in fear. And at last the priest said: The sacrifice is complete, and the gods are appeased: for they have gained, not a life for a life, but two for one.

Then the *chétí* stopped. And she laid the flower at the King's feet, and turned to go. But the King shook with agitation. And his voice trembled, as he said: What! wilt thou go so soon, almost before thou hast arrived? O tell me another tale, that I may listen to thy voice. Or, if thou wilt, say nothing: stand only where thou art, and let me watch thee: so shall thy brow, and thy smile, and the colour of thy dark blue eyes melt deep into my soul, and remain there fixed like a never-fading dye, to keep me from despair when thou art gone. Then she turned and stood. And suddenly she came up close to the King, and laid her hand upon his arm. And she said: O King, now I must go, for it is time. But wait: it may be that my mistress will send me back again: for there are matters to arrange for the morrow. And she smiled at the King, and went away quickly through the wood, while he stood motionless, and watched her as she went. And then he stooped, and picked up the flower. And he said: *Shamí*, thou hast, like me,

fire in thy heart[d], and what thou art to the *ashwattha*, that is she who laid thee at my feet to me. Like thee, I needed but the touch of her hand to burst into a flame. And here I will await her, on the edge of the pool: and if she does not come, I will not live to see another dawn.

And he waited by the pool, getting up and sitting down in his impatience, and fixing his eyes on the place where the *chétí* had vanished in the wood. And meanwhile the hours followed one another, and the sun rose higher and higher in the sky. And the heat grew, till the lotuses shone like silver on the lake slumbering beneath them: and the fish slept in the water, and the birds upon the trees, and the bees grew tired of humming and lay drunken in the flowers, and the forest hushed as if it were buried in a swoon, and the leaves forgot to rustle on the boughs. And suddenly as he watched, the King

[d] The primeval fire was generated by the friction of the *shamí* and *ashwattha* trees. Kalidas (*Raghuwansha* III. 9) calls the *shamí* '*abhyantaralínapáwakam*,' i.e. that 'which has fire in its heart.'

saw Madhupamanjarí reappear in the distance, there where she had gone away; and she stood for a moment like a picture on a wall, while the King gazed at her in an ecstasy, listening in the silence to the beating of his heart. Then, after a while, she broke the spell, and moved. And she came towards him very slowly, and stood before him. But she carried nothing in her hand. And she said: O King, my mistress wishes for a lotus, and has sent me to fetch it from her lord.

And the King looked at her, as she stood before him, with her eyes fixed upon the ground, and her long lashes lying like shadows on her cheek. And his heart rose into his mouth, and he stood silent; and he tried to speak, but the words died upon his lips. So they two stood there in the forest, surrounded by the stillness. And at last the King spoke. And he said: Dear *chétí*, there is a thing that I would ask thee: but I am afraid. Then she said: What does the King fear? And she looked at him for a moment with a smile that vanished from her lips almost before it had appeared; and dropped her eyes. Then he said: *Chétí*, canst thou tell me, whether I am in love with thee, or not?

And as the King watched her, he saw the colour come and go upon her face. And at last she said,

slowly: How can the physician decide, who does not know the symptoms?

Then the King went up, and stood close to her. And he put his two hands behind him, and shut them together tight, and leaned towards her, and said: Therefore I ask thee, because I cannot tell, whether I am in love with thee, or not. For once before, I thought I was in love, but then I felt not as I do now. And if then, I was in love, I am not now; and if now, I was not, then. And it may be, thou canst tell me, for thou art very clever, as I am not. For when I see thee coming, darkness spreads over my eyes, and fire leaps and rushes through my frame. And the sound of thy voice makes me faint, and burns me like the touch of ice: and a shiver runs like a flame over my limbs, and a deafening noise booms in my ears, and I know not what I do. And tears stand in my eyes, and yet I wish to laugh for joy; and if I try to speak, my voice trembles, as it does now; and there comes into my throat a struggle, and an obstacle, and I try to breathe and cannot, and pain presses at my heart. And what else I feel, I cannot tell; but this I know, that when thou art with me, it is life, and when thou leavest me, it is death.

But Madhupamanjarí stood silent. And her lower

lip trembled, and a tear stood upon her lashes, and her breast heaved slowly up and down. And at last she raised her eyes, and smiled through her tears, and she said: O King, it is better that I should go: for these are words fitter for my mistress than for me.

And then the King drew a long breath, and he stood up. And he looked that way and this way: and he laughed. And he said: Thou hast driven me to desperation, and I care not. Lo! I am a man and a strong man, and thou art a woman, and but a small one. Hence thou shalt not go, for thou carriest away my life.

And suddenly, he seized her in his arms, and held her tight. And as he did so, she shrieked, and struggled. And half frightened, and half laughing, she exclaimed: *Aryaputra*[e], let me go. Hast thou not guessed, that I am the Queen?

And the King started, and leaped into the air, as if a sword had been run into his heart. And as he stood astounded, Madhupamanjarí looked at him,

[e] As much as to say, *my husband*. The word is used by ladies in addressing their lords.

and almost against her will, began to laugh. And he stood gazing at her, first with amazement, and then with shame, and lastly with delight. And he exclaimed: Laugh as thou wilt, for thy laughter is music to my ear, and I care not, so long as thou art with me. But O thou delusive *chétti*, what is this? Was it not thou that wouldst not let me deceive the Queen? And yet what hast thou done to me?

And instantly, Madhupamanjarí stopped laughing, and tears fell instead from her eyes. And she looked at her husband with a smile; and suddenly she came to him and took him by the hand. And she led him away, and sat him down upon the steps, and said: Sit thou there, and I will tell thee. Then she knelt beside him on the right, and put his right hand round her, and took his left in her own. And she said: Foolish one, and didst thou think, because one was light as stubble, that all other women were the same? And didst thou also think, that thy life could be passed without the nectar of a woman? Listen now, and I will tell thee, what thou dost not know. For when my father sent to offer me to thee, I also sent my messenger, who brought to me thy portrait, and told me all about thee, and I loved thee long

before I ever saw thee. And I determined that it should be the same with thee: and I made thee long for me, not knowing who I was. And but one day I was weak, and that was the day I did not come to thee, and I passed it in weeping for thee, and to keep away was almost more than I could do. And now, I will show thee what thou hast never known, the sweetness of thy life. For when thou art joyous, I will double all thy joy: and when thou art sad, I will halve thy sorrow and remove it, and it shall be a joy to thee, deeper than joy. And when thou art well, I will surfeit thy soul with amusement and variety, and when thou art sick, I will nurse thee: and if thou art weary, thou shalt sleep upon my breast, and it shall be thy pillow: and night and day my spirit shall be with thee, and my arms around thee. And when thou dost not want me, I will be absent; and when thou wishest me again, I will be there. And if I should die before thee, it is well, and thou shalt miss me: but if thou leavest me behind, then will I follow thee through the fire, for I will not live without thee, no, not even for a day. For like a dream, and like moonlight, and like a shadow, and the image on the surface of a pool, I must vanish into nothing, when that which gave me substance

and reality is gone. For what am I, but a double and a copy and an echo of a Being which is Thou? my duty and religion, to be thy Dhruwá and Arundhatí, thy Rati and thy Rádhá, thy Chakrí and thy Kshetrabhúmí, thy Shakti and thy Twin[f]? Churn me only with the mountain of thy love, and like the milky ocean, I will give thee up my essence, and show thee that a faithful wife is the butter of beauty, and wine of youth, and syrup of pleasure, and salt of laughter, born of the foam of the waves and the lather of the sea[g]. And I will be to thee a nectar and a camphor and a lotus and a sweet, and show thee the essence and the savour of thy life; and thou shalt own that without me

[f] *Dhruwá*, 'thy polar star:' an allusion to the marriage ceremony, in which the bridegroom points out to his bride that star, the emblem of fidelity. *Arundhatí*, the 'patron-saint' of Hindoo marriages, the pattern of a perfect wife. *Rati*, the wife of Káma: *Rádhá*, Krishna's darling, the lovely milkmaid. The two last names are mystical: 'thy other half,' 'thy Self, in feminine form.' *Chakrí*, the bird that pines and dies without its mate: *Kshetrabhúmí*, an idea hardly intelligible save to a Hindoo. It means an exclusive possession, a thing to use and abuse, and a home: a sacred spot of mother earth and cultivable soil, whose memory is twined around the heart.

[g] A passage full of plays on words and mythological allusions.

it was blank, and a word without a meaning, and a night without a moon.

And then the King took her head, and held it in his hands. And he looked into her eyes, and knew that her words were a confession of the truth. And suddenly, with a violent effort, he tore himself away from her, and stood up; for the passion of his joy was more than his heart could endure. And then in an instant he returned to her. And he said: Dear *chétí*, thou hast forgotten something. And she said: What? Then he said: Wilt thou not take a lotus for thy mistress from the pool?

Then Madhupamanjarí laughed with delight. And she said: O King, thou hast said well. And they turned together, and moved towards the pool. And as they went, the King looked at her, and trembled. And he said to himself: Still she has not kissed me: and it is still to come. Then they drew near to the pool; and they found a lotus growing at its edge. And the King said: Thou shalt pluck it, and I will hold thee in my arms,

lest thou shouldst fall into the water. And he took her in his arms; and they leaned over the pool. And Madhupamanjarí stretched out her hand to the lotus. Then the King whispered in her ear: See, I have brought thee to the water, that there might be two of thy faces instead of one. Now, which shall I kiss, and which will kiss me, the *chèti* or the queen?

And Madhupamanjarí plucked the lotus. And she turned towards him, and said: Both.

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